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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/363,523	07/29/1999	RAJARAO JAMMY	99-P-7722-US (8055-98)	8231

7590 09/25/2003

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EXAMINER

ESTRADA, MICHELLE

ART UNIT PAPER NUMBER

2823

DATE MAILED: 09/25/2003

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/363,523

Applicant(s)

JAMMY ET AL.

Examiner

Michelle Estrada

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 30 June 2003.
- 2a) ☐ This action is FINAL. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-8,10-16 and 21-28 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-8,10-16 and 21-28 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- 11) ☐ The proposed drawing correction filed on _____ is: a) ☐ approved b) ☐ disapproved by the Examiner.
- If approved, corrected drawings are required in reply to this Office action.
- 12) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

- 13) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.
- 14) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) (to a provisional application).
- a) ☐ The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.
- 15) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s) _____.
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s). _____.
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: _____.

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DETAILED ACTION

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 1-8, 10-16 and 21-28 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over the combination of Wallace et al. (6,277,681) and Schrems et al. (6,018,174).

Wallace et al. disclose providing a crystalline silicon substrate (1) with an exposed precleaned surface; removing a native oxide from the exposed surface; (Col. 2, lines 20-24); and exposing the exposed surface to nitrogen to grow a continuous crystalline silicon nitride layer (3) (Col. 3, lines 55-59); wherein the step of removing includes the step of employing a hydrogen fluoride wet clean process to remove native oxide from the exposed surface; wherein the nitrogen precursor is ammonia; wherein the step of introducing ammonia is done at a temperature of 900 °C which overlaps the temperature recited in claim 7 and 27; wherein introducing ammonia is done under a pressure of 10^{-6} Torr which overlaps the pressure recited in claim 8.

Wallace et al. do not disclose precleaning the exposed surface by employing a hydrogen prebake; wherein the hydrogen prebake is done under a temperature between about 400 and about 1300 °C; wherein the hydrogen

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prebake is done under a pressure of about 10^{-9} Torr and about 600 Torr; a duration of delay between the cleaning steps.

Schrems et al. disclose precleaning the exposed surface by employing a hydrogen prebake; wherein the hydrogen prebake is done under a temperature of 900 °C which overlaps the temperature range of claim 4 and 24; wherein the hydrogen prebake is done under a pressure of about 20 Torr which overlaps the pressure range of claim 5 and 25; and making the capacitor in a trench.

It would have been within the scope of one of ordinary skill in the art to combine the teachings of Wallace et al. and Schrems et al. to enable formation of the cleaning step.

The duration of delay between the cleaning steps would have been a matter of routine optimization. It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to employ a certain time of delay, since it has been held that where the general conditions of a claim are disclosed in the prior art, discovering the optimum or workable ranges involves only routine skill in the art. *In re Aller*, 105 USPQ 233.

In addition, the selection of a certain time delay, temperature range and pressure range, its obvious because it is a matter of determining optimum process conditions by routine experimentation with a limited number of species of result effective variables. These claims are prima facie obvious without showing that the claimed ranges achieve unexpected results relative to the prior art range. *In re Woodruff*, 16 USPQ2d 1935, 1937 (Fed. Cir. 1990). See also *In re Huang*, 40 USPQ2d 1685, 1688 (Fed. Cir. 1996)(claimed ranges or a result effective

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variable, which do not overlap the prior art ranges, are unpatentable unless they produce a new and unexpected result which is different in kind and not merely in degree from the results of the prior art). See also *In re Boesch*, 205 USPQ 215 (CCPA) (discovery of optimum value of result effective variable in known process is ordinarily within skill or art) and *In re Aller*, 105 USPQ 233 (CCPA 1995) (selection of optimum ranges within prior art general conditions is obvious).

Note that the specification contains no disclosure of either the critical nature of the claimed time delay, temperature range and pressure range or any unexpected results arising therefrom. Where patentability is said to be based upon particular chosen time delay or upon another variable recited in a claim, the Applicant must show that the chosen time delay is critical. *In re Woodruff*, 919 F.2d 1575, 1578, 16 USPQ2d 1934, 1936 (Fed. Cir. 1990).

Response to Arguments


Applicant argues that the delay of time is not a matter of routine optimization. However, between steps there is always a time delay, time spent between process steps is a result effective variable because it results in different yields per time. Applicant has not given evidence of any unexpected results.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Michelle Estrada whose telephone number is (703) 308-0729. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday through Friday.

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If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Olik Chaudhuri can be reached on 703-306-2794. The fax phone numbers for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned are 703-308-7722 for regular communications and 703-308-7724 for After Final communications.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist whose telephone number is 703-308-0956.


George Fourson
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 2823


MEstrada
September 20, 2003